



Yellow Rails and Rice Festival

The First Annual "Yellow Rails and Rice Festival" is scheduled for 30 October-7 November 2009. These dates are chosen to maximize the chances that second crop harvesting operations will be in progress and that Yellow Rails will have arrived in the region in substantial numbers.

30-31 October: LSU Ag Center, Jennings, LA
6-7 November: TWA building, Thornwell, LA

This year, Yellow Rails and Rice

Festival festivities will take place on two weekends. On 30-31 October, the base of operations for the first weekend will be at the LSU Ag Center in Jennings, Louisiana. The Ag Center is conveniently located just south of I-10 on Hwy. 14 (1006 Lake Arthur Avenue · Jennings, LA · 70546 - 1407 Phone: 337- 824-1773 · Fax: 337-824-0748). The following weekend, 6-7 November, the base of operations shifts to the Thornwell Association Warehouse in Thornwell, Jefferson Davis Parish. On arrival, participants are asked to check in at the operation center. Here there will be more information about rails and where farmers are cutting. From the center, "facilitators" will take groups to harvesting operations where they can watch from the sidelines or ride aboard a harvesting combine. Information on where farmers are cutting, as well as other bird species or large aggregations of birds will be posted and updated regularly during each weekend at the operation center. In addition to seeing Yellow Rails, observers will be able to enjoy a tremendous variety and abundance of other bird species in the area.

The festival is intended to: 1) bring birdwatchers and other participants and rice farmers together during Louisiana's late (second) rice harvest to make Yellow Rail searching a more reliable endeavor; 2) give individuals the opportunity to see rice harvesting operations up close to further appreciate the rich cultural traditions of SW Louisiana agriculture-based communities; 3) promote mutually beneficial agritourism/ecotourism that will provide recreational enjoyment and generate economic opportunities in SW Louisiana's rice-growing region and adjacent areas; 4) further educate the public of the critical importance of rice cultivation and other "working wetlands" to bird populations and to encourage cooperation between agricultural and bird conservation interests in a joint effort to preserve these relatively bird friendly agricultural systems; and, most importantly, 5) to have fun, see lots of great birds, and meet lots of nice people! Rice harvesting is dependent on good weather conditions, so any significant rainfall could interfere with harvesting. But, hopes are that the longer festival period may lessen the chances of a complete washout, and rain-contingencies are in consideration.

So, mark your calendars and please stay tuned for further developments.

To receive email updates, as well as provide a gauge of festival attendance, please email your interest to participate to Donna Dittmann at yellowrailsandrice@gmail.com.

Yellow Rails and Rice Festival 2009

FRIDAY & SATURDAY 30-31 OCTOBER.

Central meeting location will be at the LSU AgCenter facility on Hwy. 26 south in JENNINGS, LA.

Open from 9AM - 4 PM.

Participants can begin arriving at the meeting location at 9:00 AM. For this year at least, there is no official preregistration, but we would prefer all participants to first check-in at the meeting location. Information handouts will be available. There will be a brief, repeating powerpoint slideshow on Yellow Rails, and possibly other slideshows to watch.

Participants can arrive to participate at any time while the meeting location is open. Starting at approximately 10:00 AM, facilitator-led groups will depart hourly from the meeting location and caravan to harvesting sites. Caravan leaders will "hand-off" the group to an onsite facilitator, who will assist participants to spot and identify rails. Participants can stay as long as they want at the harvest site, and will be on their own when they depart the site. The meeting center will close and the last group(s) will depart for the harvesting site(s), at 4:00 PM each day. Harvesting activities sometimes continue until dusk.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY 6-7 NOVEMBER. Central meeting location area will be at the Thornwell Warehouse Association building at THORNWELL, Jeff Davis Parish, LA. Otherwise, details as above.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE FESTIVAL and would like to receive email updates, please email Donna Dittmann: yellowrailsandrice@gmail.com. So we can gauge interest, please indicate which festival day(s) you would be most likely to visit. This will help us estimate potential turnout.

